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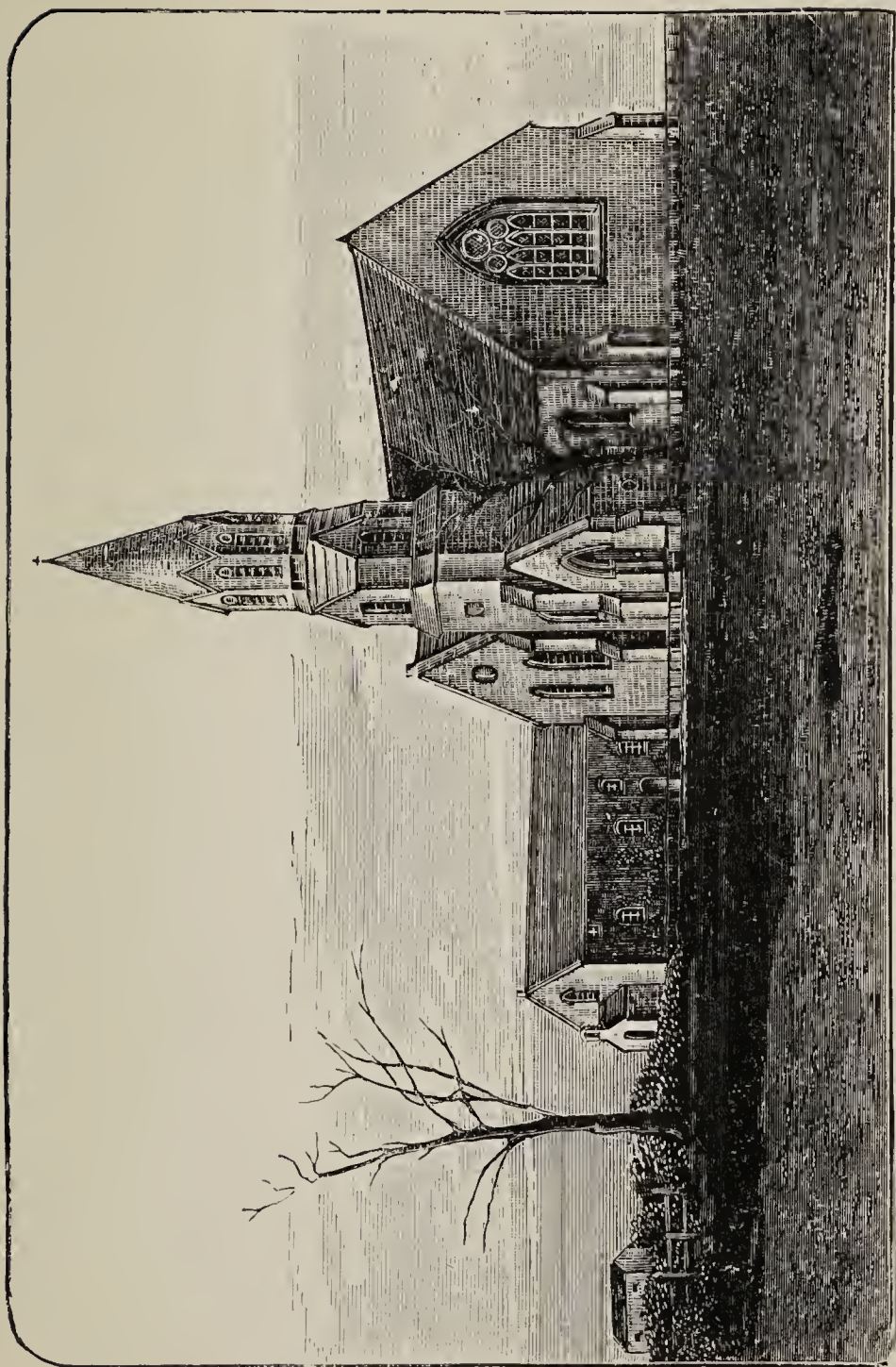
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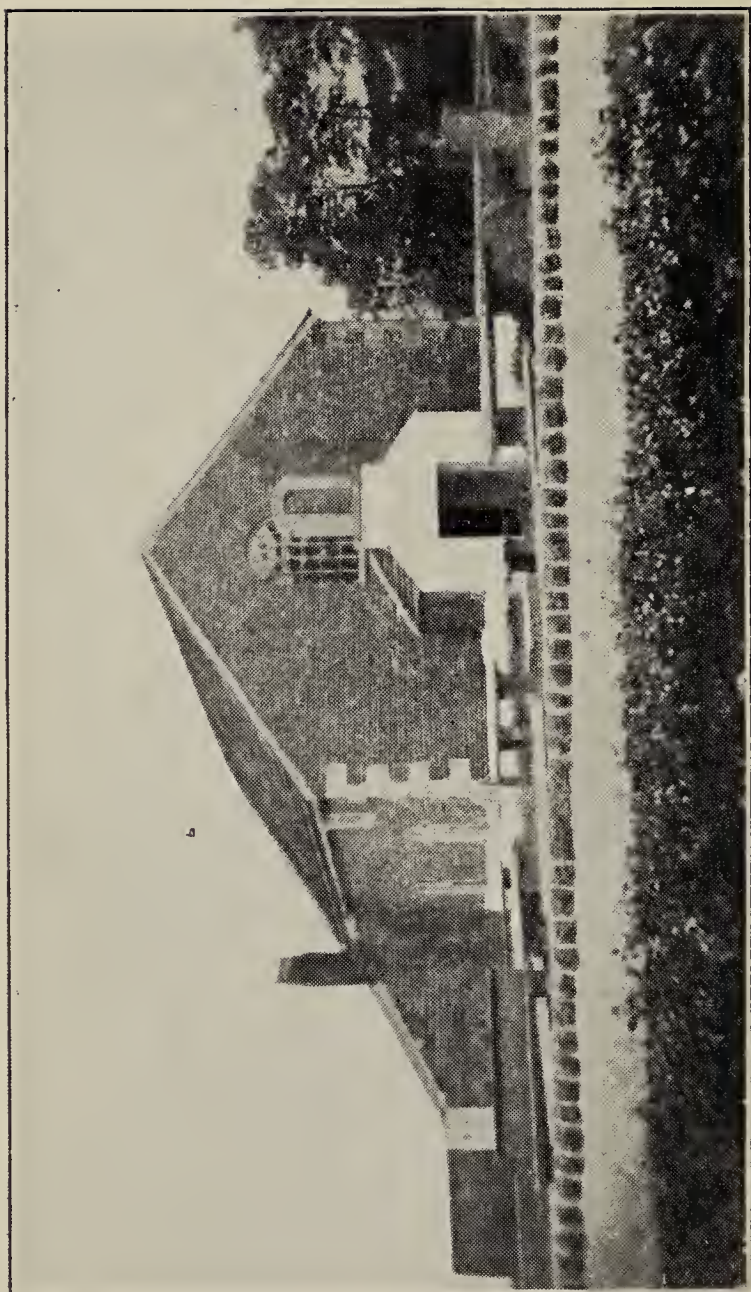
Nightingale, Benjamin, 1854-
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The romance of Cuthbert
Harrison

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PRESENT CONGREGATIONAL, CHURCH AT ELSWICK.



THE OLD CHAPEL OF 1753.

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THE ROMANCE

MAY 18 1959

OF

Cuthbert Harrison,

OF ELSWICK, IN LANCASHIRE,

AN EJECTED MINISTER.

BY THE

Rev. B. NIGHTINGALE, M.A., Litt.D.

Author of

Lancashire Nonconformity; The Ejected of 1662 in
Cumberland and Westmorland; The Story of the
Lancashire Congregational Union; The Heroic Age
of Congregationalism; From the Great Awakening to
the Evangelical Revival; History of Independency
in Tockholes; Congregationalism Re-examined; Early
Stages of the Quaker Movement in Lancashire, &c.,
&c.

GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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To
W. W. GALLOWAY, Esq., J.P.,
OF BILSBOROUGH HALL,
NEAR PRESTON,

WHOSE FRIENDSHIP IT IS MY GREAT PRIVILEGE
TO ENJOY, TO WHOM AND TO WHOSE
FATHER I HAVE BEEN
INDEBTED FOR MUCH GENEROUS HELP
IN MY WORK, THIS LITTLE BOOK
IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED.

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PREFACE.

THIS little book is the result of several years' patient gleaning in many fields. It is not in the least suggested that it contains all possible knowledge of Cuthbert Harrison ; for it may well be that time will reveal other sources of information respecting him at present unknown, but I have incorporated in it all that is at present known of him. Though he figures less in general religious history than some of the worthies of his time, and though no literature is known to have come from his pen, he did a great work in serving the little Congregational cause at Elswick all through that dark and trying period when persecution bitter and relentless sought its suppression.

The story of these great religious heroes is well worth reading in these days especially, and by young people in particular, that they may be reminded of the enormous cost of the religious heritage which it is our privilege to possess.

B. NIGHTINGALE.

Miltona,

Riley Avenue,

St. Annes-on-Sea,

October, 1926.

I.—A QUIET LITTLE VILLAGE.

IN the centre of the Fylde in Lancashire is the little village of Elswick. All about this part of the county the country is very flat, and being some five miles from Kirkham, the nearest railway station, it enjoys a considerable amount of "splendid isolation"; it is a real retreat, and has a charm all its own. What it lacks in the way of hill and dale is more than made up in its abundant fine woodland scenery; and he must indeed be difficult to please who is not frequently entranced by the beauty spots that are easily found in this neighbourhood.

The village can lay claim to considerable antiquity. As much might be inferred from the name; for there is a great deal of ancient history concealed within it. It appears in documents as old as the Norman Conquest, being, of course, somewhat differently spelled from what it is to-day. In Domesday Book it is "Edelswick," and, in later documents, "Ethelsyck" and "Ethelswyck," the villa, retreat or residence of Ethel, some Anglo Saxon proprietor. It still retains some of its quaintness in the thatched cottages that linger in it, and gives one the feeling of

reposefulness as one passes through it, though charabanc, motor and motor bus have brought it much nearer the town than it was a few years ago. In the past, it was quite away from the line of life, little known and little visited ; and, as this part of Lancashire was once predominantly Roman Catholic, it is said that it often served as a hiding place for Catholic priests when they were wanted for reported plots and intrigues against the Government. During the Great Civil War its peaceful abodes were several times disturbed by the din of conflict. Two such occasions in particular may be noted. In 1643 the Earl of Derby, who was the King's most powerful and devoted supporter in the county, marched with a considerable army against Lancaster, in reference to which a contemporary writer says :—" To Lancaster was their march, through Treales, Wharles, and Rosaker, and whoever had the title of Roundhead in their way, from them they took what they liked. It is said the Earl himself stayed at Elswick whilst his companie plundered Mr. William Swarbrecke's books, a blemis and stain to his honour if true."

The same writer, in his account of the defeat and dispersion of the Scotch forces by Cromwell at the Ribble Bridge, in 1648, has the following :—" They fled downward into the Fyld country, and, in great feare, as was thought, parted themselves into sundry roads

or waies. For more expedition, some took up a way by the Lund Chapell, through Treales, and up to Eswicke and soe homeward. Others of them went through Kirkham and were going through it all that night and soe to Thistleton, whether over Wyre Watter or by St. Michaels was not learned."

Two names here call for a moment's notice. Baines, in his *History of Lancashire*, says that William Swarbrick was the Nonconformist minister of Elswick Chapel, but there is no evidence for that. He is supposed to have been the son of Thomas Swarbrick of Elswick, and was trained at Oxford, taking his M.A. degree on July 5th, 1636. He is said to have practised medicine, and he raised a company for Parliament in the district. As Captain William Swarbrick, he was in charge of the Royalist prisoners from Lathom, in 1644, first at Preston and afterwards at Lancaster. He rendered most valuable service to the Parliamentary cause.

For once also we are on solid ground in relation to Oliver Cromwell. If half the stories current about him are true, no man was ever so ubiquitous, but we are not dependent upon tradition here, it is history that places Cromwell in this neighbourhood, and, though no dismantled fortress or crumbling abbey witnesses to his destructive presence in Elswick, we do know that the men who fled before his victorious power sought refuge in

its safe retreats. More than thirty years ago, a writer in a local paper, who signs himself "Philomela," speaks of Elswick thus :—"Some of its inhabitants dignify it with the name of town. It consists of only a few houses, some of which are modern looking, but many of them are thatched, whitewashed structures of considerable age, and the population numbers about 230. The houses have not been put down promiscuously, as in many villages, but according to plan ; at any rate, whether the builders had any idea of arrangement or not, it so happens that the houses make two almost straight parallel lines, being separated by the principal road through the village. There are two other roads running almost parallel with this one, a circumstance which has led some to say that the Elswick people believe in the doctrine of the Trinity in more senses than one."

II.—EARLY NONCONFORMITY.

The principal object in the village is the Congregational Church. Its lofty spire is a landmark for many miles around. The building itself is comparatively modern, having been erected some 50 years ago on land given by Miss Harrison, a descendant of Cuthbert Harrison. It was opened for public worship on May 28th, 1874, when Dr. Macfadyen, of Manchester, was the preacher. By its side is a very much older one which bears date 1753. Altered and enlarged, it is now used for Sunday School and other purposes; but there was an earlier one still on a spot a short distance away called Elswick Lees, and the Church itself goes back well on for three centuries. The precise date cannot be given, but the first building was erected as a sort of Chapel of Ease to St. Michael's, and in 1650 it is referred to as "lately erected with the voluntary and free assistance of some neighbouring towns." Probably it was this fact in part, as well as its isolated position, coupled with the strong Puritan and Nonconformist element in the district, that enabled the friends to retain their hold upon the place amidst all the changes of subsequent years.

The first minister of whom we have any record, probably the first to serve the Church,

was the Rev. Wm. Bell, M.A., who, in 1650, is said to have had £50 paid to him from the Plundered Ministers' Fund; and it is stated that "he hath officiated in the said Chappell ever since the 26th of December, 1649." So much seems clear, though the case is not free from difficulty. Later, William Bell appears at Huyton, near Liverpool, where he suffered ejection in 1662. A high character is given to him by Calamy, who says that he was "a great scholar and a good orator, noted for his neat and sententious preaching."

The line of worthy men who have served in the ministry here is long, but the greatest romance gathers around the name of Cuthbert Harrison, whose life, in point of time, covers by far the larger part of that long, dark period when Nonconformity of every type was under a ban, and led to fines, imprisonment, exile, and even in some cases death.

It is worth noting that not a few of the early pioneers of Nonconformity in Lancashire, who so courageously suffered on behalf of civil and religious liberty, were natives of the county which was the principal scene of their labours. It was so with Thomas Jollie, of Altham, and Wymondhouses; Isaac Ambrose, of Preston and Garstang; Nathaniel Heywood, of Ormskirk (brother of the celebrated Oliver Heywood), and preeminently so with Cuthbert Harrison.

He was the youngest of five brothers, sons of Richard and Agnes Harrison, of Newton ; and was baptized at Kirkham on February 5th, 1626–7. An account of him by his son, Richard Harrison, for the benefit of a younger brother, Paul, was lent to me many years ago by Mrs. Harrison, then at Southport, widow of the late Edward Harrison, a descendant of Cuthbert Harrison, and many years a solicitor in Preston. The document is extremely interesting and valuable, and is given here in full, with occasional breaks. It begins thus :—“ Dear Brother,—I am greatly surprised that thou should be a son of a reverend, worthy and ingenious divine, and (which is far more valuable), a conscientious and pious Christian of the primitive stamp, with whom the world and the things of time were of no value when in opposition to God and duty, and be ignorant of thy extract and wholly of the life and sufferings of him who is now inheriting the promised blessedness of the righteous in glory. I confess in this place, where I have lived to this day, and where thou spent half of thy time, there is yet little to be found besides ignorance, superstition and ceremony ; and whoever strenuously opposed these (if no reflection could be cast upon his memory when dead), then all imaginable endeavours would be used to bury in oblivion his piety and endeavours to spread divine knowledge and holiness ; which made it very difficult with me to recover good

vouchers for our father's life and hardships, being but nine years old when he died. Soon after Dr. Calamy's two volumes of the abridgement of Mr. Baxter's *Life and Times* came out [1713], I heard thereof, and found our father only named as ejected at Singleton (Lancashire); and the Doctor, giving a promise of an appendix, I was solicited and prevailed with by my neighbouring dissenting ministers to rectify the mistakes and to draw up a short character of him, according to what written vouchers I had, but did not expect it to be printed, because his being ejected in Ireland did not agree with the Doctor's title page."

Before dealing with Cuthbert Harrison's public career, it may be well to note that at Lund Chapel, no great distance away, was a Joseph Harrison, who also suffered ejection. He is spoken of as "a good scholar and a methodical preacher, fixed in a dark corner, where he was wonderfully followed and very useful." He died in 1664. His father's name was also Richard Harrison, of Freckleton, and, owing to this, it has been thought that he was brother to Cuthbert, but this does not appear to have been the case.*

* So Mr. Ernest Axon in his "Harrison Ainsworth's Maternal Ancestors," to which I am indebted for several points about the Harrison family.



BANKFIELD.



REV. THOMAS JOLLIE.

III.—CUTHBERT HARRISON'S MINISTRY AT SINGLETON AND IN IRELAND.

Cuthbert Harrison was educated in part at Oxford and in part at Cambridge, taking his Bachelor's Degree from the latter place. He settled first at Singleton, and the testimonial of his Ordination, which took place at Kirkham, is as follows :—

“ Whereas Cuthbert Harrison, Bachelor of Arts, aged about 24 years, hath addressed himself unto us, authorized by ordinance of Parliament of the 28th of August, 1646, for Ordination of Ministers desiring to be ordained a presbiter, being chosen by the inhabitants within the Chapelry of Singleton, within the County of Lancaster, to officiate there, and having been examined by us, the Ministers of the Seventh Classis, and found sufficiently qualified for the ministerial function according to the rules prescribed in the said Ordinance, And thereupon approved, we have this day proceeded solemnly to set him apart to the office of a presbiter and work of the Ministry of the Gospel by laying on of hands by us here present with fasting and prayer. By virtue whereof we do declare him to be a lawfull and sufficiently Authorised Minister of Jesus

Christ; in testimony whereof we have hereunto put our hands, the 27th of Nov., 1651.

RICHARD BRIGGS.

JOHN LAPPYE.

RICH. REDMAN.”

His appointment to Singleton would appear to have been somewhat previous to his ordination; hence the following, which is dated August 9th, 1651 :—

“ Paied Mr. Cuthbert Harrison, minister at Much Singleton, in full, one quarter’s augmentacon ending April 7th last, out of the impropriate Rectory of Kirkham, sequestered from Thomas Clifton, a popish delinqt. £12 10s. 0d.

The Committee of Plundered Ministers also say :—

“ Whereas this Committee have, on the 10th of January last, graunted the yearely sume of fifty pounds out of the impropriate Rectory of Kirkham, in the County of Lancaster, sequestered from Thomas Clifton, of Lytham, Esq., delinqt, for increase of the maintenance of such minister as this Committee shall approve of to officiate in the Chappell of Singleton in the said County. It is ordered that the said fifty pounds a yeare be paid unto Mr. Cuthbert Harrison for the space of one yeare next ensuing, who is hereby appointed to officiate in the said

Chappell as a probationer for and during the said time, and the Commissioners for Sequestracons in the said County are required to pay the same accordingly for the said time according to ye Act of Parliament in that behalf.

GILBT. MILLINGTON.

I have taken notice of this Order.

November ye 25th, 1651.

RICHD. SHERWAN."

AGAIN, " By the Committee for Plundered Ministers, January 2nd, 1651-2.

Whereas this Committee have, the 7th of January last, granted the yearly sune of ffifty poundes out of theimpropriate Rectory of Kirkham in the County of Lancaster, sequestred from Thomas Clifton of Lytham, Esq., delinqt, for increase of the maintenance of the Minister of the Chappell of Singleton in the said County. It is ordered that the said ffifty poundes a yeare be continued and paid unto Mr. Cuthbert Harrison, a Godly and Orthodox Divine, Minister of the said Church, together with all the arrears thereof incured since the 7th of January, 1651, afforesaid, and the Commissioners of the said County are required to pay the said arreare unto the said Mr. Cuthbert, and continue the payment

of the said ffifty poundes a yeare unto him according to the Act of Parliament in that behalfe.

WILLM. KAY.

PE. TEMPLE.

WILLM. GRIMSHAW.

I have taken notice of this Order. January the 20th, 1651.

RI. SHERWYN, AUDR.”

Two receipts of Cuthbert Harrison’s read as follows :—

“ Jany. the first, Anno 1652. Received from the Commissioners for Sequestration for the County of Lancaster, at the hands of Mr. Randle Sharples, their treasurer, by mee, Cuthbert Harrison, Minister at Singleton Chappell, the sum of xxxli. alowed me for officiating ther, out of the Impropriat Rectorie of Kirkham, sequestrd from Thomas Clifton, Esqre., in full till the vij. of July last. I say received in pursuance of an Act of Parlimt of the xxxist of May, 1650, the afforesaid sume of xxxli.

By mee, Cuthbert Harrison. Ordr. on the fyle, 1651.”

“ Jany. the ffirst, 1652.

Recd. from the Comrs. for the Sequestors for the County of Lancaster, att the hands of Mr. Randle Sharples, their trar., by

mee, Cuthbert Harrison, Minister at Singleton, the sume of ffive poundes (vli) beinge in pte. of an augmentation of 50li p. ann., due since the 7th of July last, alowed by the Committee of Plundered Ministers out of the Improprate Rectory of Kirkham, sequestred for the recusancy and delinquency of Thomas Clifton, Esqr. I say recd. in pursuance of an Act of Parliament of the 30th May, 1650, and of the said Ordr, the sume of vli. by mee, Cuthbert Harrison."

The chapel at Singleton, in 1651, is said to have been "newly erected" having neither minister nor maintenance." It is described in the Harrison letter thus:—

"The place where the chapel stood in Singleton was on the back of the slated house, a little further than the pinfold in the road towards Kirkham, and, upon the restoration of King Charles, was pulled down, and the said slated house formed out of the materials and turned into an ale-house, and so continues. At the time when our father officiated there, and till the Restoration, the revenues of Kirkham were divided into three, whereof the then vicar had one, Lund Chapel another, and Singleton the third."

It has already been noticed that the chapel at Elswick Lees was in existence, and it would appear, though the case is not free from

difficulty, that some part of the time that Cuthbert Harrison was at Singleton, William Bell, M.A., afterwards associated with Huyton, near Liverpool, was his neighbour. Cuthbert Harrison was at Singleton in 1654, and how long after we do not know, but for some reason or other he went to Shankill cum Lurgan, in the County of Armagh, Ireland. The Rev. Alex. Gordon, M.A., one of the greatest living authorities on Nonconformist history, sends me an interesting note in reference to this place, which he spells with "i" instead of "e." "As for Cuthbert Harrison's Irish charge," says he, "Shankill (*i.e.*, at the old cell-church) is the name of various parishes where the dedication of the original church was forgotten or non-existent. Belfast, for example, is in the parish of Shankill. Harrison's Shankill was the parish in which the town of Lurgan stands." Respecting his life here little is known, but the letter previously named has the following:—

"By the Commissioners for government and management of affairs in Ireland, upon consideration had of the petition of Cuthbert Harrison, Minister of the Gospell at Shankill cum Lurgan, in the County of Armagh, it is ordered that the petitioner have the tithes of Shankill aforesaid assigned unto him, and, accordingly (in case such assignment do not break the union of the parishes, or that the said tithes be not already disposed of) the

Commissioners appointed for settling of tithes and glebes in the said County of Armagh are to forbear selling or disposing of them ; and it is also ordered that the petitioner shall be supplied what the profits of the said tithes shall appear to fall short of his former salary of £100 per annum, in such manner as other ministers shall be supplied in like cases. Dated at Dublin, the 14th day of July, 1660.

CHARLES COOK.

WILLIAM BURY.”

His stay in Ireland was only short, and Richard Harrison's letter says that he was ejected thence. I am aware that objection is taken by some to this, on the ground, it is said, that the Uniformity Act of 1662 did not apply to Ireland, but in actual practice the treatment of the two countries was much the same at that time. It needs also to be remembered that the Ejections really began long before the Act of Uniformity, soon after the Restoration in point of fact. Calamy's list is made up of many so ejected, and until clear evidence to the contrary is forthcoming, the traditional view that Cuthbert Harrison suffered Ejection, like many others, may be regarded as correct. In support of this also is the following, as well as Richard Harrison's statement :—

“ Many other Presbyterian Ministers in different parts of Ireland were ejected by

the Act of Uniformity. Of these, I may mention the Revd. Cuthbert Harrison, minister of Lurgan, who endured severe persecution."

This appears as a note to Martineau's Ordination Sermon by the Rev. James Armstrong, of Strand Street Chapel, Dublin. In other ways also he suffered very considerably. He received the following letter, evidently an attempt at blackmailing him :—

" Sir, I command you to make reddy the sum of 100 hundred pounds against the theard of December, which will be demanded of you at your own door att two o'clock in the morning, under pain of your house and barne being blown up in the instant, if not reddy at the time appointed in cashe, expect your own person in danger when you are the least aware of itt."

IV.—IN DARK DAYS.

Cuthbert Harrison is said to have “ narrowly escaped with life in a ragged disguise for England, and his beloved people there preserved his goods for him.” He returned to his native district and settled at Bankfield, Singleton, on his own estate, though how this came into his possession is not clear. He married about this time Ellen Swarbrick, sister to Dr. Swarbrick, and who, after Cuthbert Harrison’s death, married again. She lived to a long age, and, in her will dated August 4th, 1716, she bequeathed “ the sum of one guinea to such person as shall preach a sermon in Elswicke Chapel upon the occasion of my death.”

During the operation of the Act of Uniformity and the other persecuting edicts of the time, things were very unsettled and the authorities became exceedingly nervous. Hence some leading Nonconformist laymen and ministers were suspected of hatching plots against the King. At the Lancaster Assizes, in March, 1663–4, a letter was in the hands of the judges in which “ Mr. Harrison of the File country ” is included in a list of the “ chiefest agents and trustees of the plotters ”; and in August, 1665, “ Mr. Harrison of the Fyld ” is named in a list of

“ persons fit to be secured, because suspected of being connected with an intended rebellion.”

In 1672 there was a short breathing space for persecuted Nonconformists during the operation of the Indulgence Declaration. They were allowed to take out personal licences to preach and to license buildings in which public worship might be held. Three were taken out by Cuthbert Harrison, and they were in the following terms :—

“ 1.—The meeting howse in Elswick Lees, in the parish of St. Michael’s, Lanc. Cong., 16th July, 1672.

“ 2.—License to Cuthbert Harrison to be a Congr. Teacher in his howse in Singleton Grange, 16th July.

“ 3—Cuthbert Harrison’s howse, in Singleton Grange, in Kirkham parish, Lanc. Congr., 16th July.”

The following is a copy of the Licence for the Chapel :—

“ Charles R. Charles, by the grace of God, King of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, etc., to all Mayors, Bayliffs, Constables and other our Officers and Ministers, Civil and Military, whom it may concern, Greeting. In pursuance of our Declaration of the 15th of March, 1672, We have allowed, and We do hereby allow of the meeting house in Elswick

Lees, in the parish of St. Michael's in our County of Lancaster to be a place for the use of such as do not conform to the Church of England, who are of the Persuasion commonly called Congregationall, to meet and assemble in, in order to their publick Worship and Devotion. And all and singular our Officers and Ministers, Civil and Military, whom it may concern, are to take due notice thereof. And they, and every of them are hereby strictly charged and required to hinder any tumult or disturbance and to protect them in their said Meetings and Assemblies. Given at our Court at Whitehall, the 16th day of July, in the 24th year of our Reign, 1672. By His Majesties Command. Clifford."

The Indulgence Declaration, however, was withdrawn after about fifteen months, and persecution appeared again as vigorous as ever. Cuthbert Harrison's great antagonist was the Vicar of Kirkham, Richard Clegg, though he was in no way a match for him. Richard Clegg appears to have regarded himself as specially called to look after the "phanaticks" in his wide parish, who, as Nonconformists, Quakers and Romanists were very considerable. Richard Harrison's letter reads thus :—

"The Licence served him but a short time, for the Parliament meeting declared them illegal, and then he preached in his

own house at Bankfield, as he had formerly done, before that he had obtained the licence and also at several houses in and near Elswick, very privately in the night, to such as would adventure to hear him."

Around that statement one's imagination might play considerably, and it is most suggestive. It shows how helpless was the task of those who were trying to exterminate Nonconformity by repressive legislation. "In his own house," it is said, "also at several houses in and near Elswick, very privately in the night, he preached to such as would adventure to hear him." That was the sort of thing that was happening all over the country, and before which persecution had eventually to give way. The document continues :—

"He often went into Ireland to visit his beloved people there. He practised physic with good success, whereby he supported his family and gained the favour of the neighbouring gentry. He baptised us his own children with many more. Mr. Richard Clegg, vicar of Kirkham, fell violently upon him, first in the Ecclesiastical Court for preaching, marrying one James Benson, of Wharles, and baptising a child of his, and got both him and Benson excommunicated. Our father's absolution from the censure of that time I have dated sexto die Mensis Martii Anno Domini, 1677. Signed, Guliel Wilson, Rg. Dep. L. Fogge, snr.

“ He sometimes repaired to the parish church of Kirkham, particularly one Lord’s day whilst he was under the aforesaid censure, and took his place among the gentlemen in the chancel. Mr. Clegg, the vicar, who wrote his prayer before sermon, and all his sermons in characters, was got into the pulpit, and, looking aside and seeing him come in and place himself, lost his end. He could not find it again and was silent for some time, then ordered the churchwardens to put him out. They went to our father and told him what Mr. Clegg had ordered, and desired that he would go out. He refused, and said that except Mr. Clegg would put him out he would not go. Mr. Clegg then desired Mr. Christopher Parker, who was Justice of the Peace and then in church, and sat within six feet of our father, to put him out, but Mr. Parker refused and said that he would not meddle. Then Mr. Clegg went to our father and took him by the sleeve and desired him to go out. He went along with Mr. Clegg, who opened the chancel door ; and he was no sooner out than he exclaimed with a strong voice :— ‘ It’s time to go when the devil drives ! ’ Thou canst scarce imagine a greater disorder than was reported to have been in the Church at that time.

“ Shortly after, the vicar sued my father at common law upon the Statute called

Qui tam for £20 a month for six months absenting from that Church, and the case was brought for trial at the Assizes at Lancaster, but I know not the judge's name. Our father, in his defence, proved that he was at Church one Lord's Day in one of the months, on his Journall to Chester, being cited to appear and answer a libel of Mr. Clegg's; a Lord's Day in another month; and under the Church censure for the other term; and that he went to Church and was put out as aforesaid. The judge was hearty, and after he had summoned up the evidence, he told the jury there was 'fiddle and be hanged and fiddle not and be hanged. The defendant was under Church censure, which might prevent his going to Church, goes to Church and is put out and sued upon this Statute for not going to Church. Gentlemen, pray consider it.' The jury brought in for defendant and all costs were thrown upon Mr. Clegg with many affronting scoffs. I need not mention vouchers, because the aforesaid proceedings were public and known to many hundreds of people, and at this time related in discourse by some as heard from fathers and grandfathers. Report is that our father was again troubled in the Ecclesiastical Court and under censure at the time of his death, which was serene and comfortable, in October, 1681."

It is said that the trouble between Richard Clegg and Cuthbert Harrison had also to do with tithes. Hence in Trinity Term, 1676, Richard Clegg proceeded against him and John Hale, of Singleton Grange, "in a cause of tithes." The Presentment Books also give the following :—

"I present Mr. Cuthbert Harrison, of Singleton, in the parish of Kirkham, for practising phisicke without Licence (except from Mr. Barrow) as also for keeping two children of his from publicke Baptism (or rather for his babtiseing of them himself), he being excommunicat, and not according to the litargie, and for that his wife hath not after her delivery at the birth of either of the said children returned her publicke thanks.

RICHARD CLEGG.

Garstang, March the 17th, 1677-8."

As already stated, Cuthbert Harrison did not live to see the dawn of happier days ; he died in 1681, and was buried at Kirkham on October 16th of that year. Respecting this, Richard Harrison says :—

"Great entreaty was made to Mr. Clegg to suffer his body to be buried in the Church, who was prevailed with, and he was interred a little within the great doors, which has since been the burying place of our family.

Notwithstanding, Mr. Clegg fixed upon his grave the following epitaph :—

‘ Here lies Cud,
Who never did good,
But always was in strife :
Oh ! let the knave
Lie in his grave
And ne’er return to life.’

“ Which Mr. Lowd, of Kirkham, pulled off, and fixed thus :—

‘ Here lies Cud,
Who still did good
And never was at strife
But with Dick Clegg
Who furiously
Opposed his holy life.’ ”

Some recent writers make light of these two epitaphs, one even saying that the first was the “ harmless effusion of an obscure poet ” of quite recent times, but Richard Harrison’s letter is a satisfactory answer to that, and it gives as a variation of the second one the following :—

“ Here lies Cud,
Who did much good
And never courted strife ;
He has naught to fear
From enemies here,
And will return to life.”

Calamy gives him a very high character. "Such as knew him, says he, "spoke of him as a man of good sense whose ministrations discovered both learning and piety."

Cuthbert Harrison's children were the following :—

William, intended for the Nonconformist Ministry, and who, on June 24th, 1680, entered the Academy of Richard Frankland, M.A., to be trained as such, but he died young and was buried at Kirkham, November 22nd, 1681.

Richard, buried at Kirkham, May 27th, 1672.

Richard, the author of the letter, who resided at Bankfield, and became the father of a somewhat numerous family. To him Dr. Swarbrick, his uncle, left his "physick books, English, Latin and Manuscripts," and the residue of his estate. He died February 7th, 1759, at the age of 86, and was buried in Singleton Churchyard.

Paul, to whom the letter was sent, was at London for some time, and died there on May 4th, 1749.

Claudia, respecting whom little appears to be known.

V.—DESCENDANTS OF CUTHBERT HARRISON.

The descendants of Cuthbert Harrison were very numerous, those along the line of Richard, the writer of the letter, being specially so, and, as many of these rose to distinction in various ways, a sentence or two respecting them is desirable. Richard Harrison married Alice, the daughter of John Fayle, of the Mains, probably the person mentioned in connection with the bridge at Bankfield, and through her he had the following children :—

1.—ELLEN, who married James Benn, master of a vessel in Whitehaven, whose son, James Benn, became a Nonconformist minister at Blackley, near Manchester, and other places.

2.—RICHARD, married Agnes Crombleholme, daughter of the Rev. Richard Crombleholme, vicar of St. Michael's, from whom sprang Cuthbert Harrison, B.A., a clergyman in the Church of England.

3.—MARGARET, married John Hall, of High falong, in the parish of Poulton-le-Fylde.

4.—CUTHBERT, “master of a vessel from Wire and afterwards of another from London, and died at Bluefields, Jamaica.”

5.—JOHN, married Elizabeth Norris, of Hoghton, and was a schoolmaster.

6.—CLAUDIA, who died in infancy.

7.—WILLIAM, who graduated M.A. in Glasgow, and was an eminent Nonconformist minister at Stand, near Manchester, Buxton and Chinley. His wife was Ann Cooper, whose mother was the daughter of the Rev. Samuel Angier, of Dukinfield, of the Angier family of Nonconformist fame. By his wife, William Harrison had, among others, the Rev. Ralph Harrison, the eminent Nonconformist minister of Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, whose descendants were the Rev. Wm. Harrison, Nonconformist minister of Blackley, near Manchester; William Harrison Ainsworth, the distinguished novelist; Dr. John Harrison, Nonconformist minister of Chowbent; and Dr. James Bower Harrison, an eminent surgeon in Manchester.

William Harrison, senior, like many a Nonconformist minister of the time, was in the habit of keeping a diary, and in it he records visits paid to his father in the ancestral home at Bankfield, whose quiet beauty and reposefulness always threw him into raptures. He left instructions for the diary to be destroyed at his death, but before doing so his son Ralph, the minister, made several extracts, of which we have the following in Ralph Harrison's own language :—

“ April 29th, 1742.—My father paid a visit to my grandfather at Bankfield, who

was 70 years of age, and had a happy meeting with six of his brothers and sisters, viz. :—Richard, John, Paul, Joseph, Margaret and Alice. With this meeting my father was much affected. He appears to have had a high esteem and regard for his father.”

“ September 16th, 1758.—Father went to see my grandfather who was very ill, and 19th took his last farewell, with which he was much affected.”

“ February 7th, 1759.—My grandfather died.”

8.—PAUL, “ an apothecary, of Bletchingly, in Surrey,” who died unmarried.

9.—JOSEPH, “ master of a ship or captain.”

10.—ALICE, married William Sanderson, of Ballam, near Kirkham. She died on April 13th, 1806, aged 90 years.

It would appear that the members of William Harrison’s family were distinctly musical, and writing to his son Ralph, on October 20th, 1769, he has the following :—

“ Your sister returned out of the Fylde country last Friday but one in good spirits ; was highly pleased with her journey, and much esteemed by her relations. She gives her love to you and will be very thankful for any good tunes you bring when you

come over, which I hope will not be long. She has only brought two tunes with her out of the Fylde, viz.: 'Come, haste to this Wedding' and another called 'New Spinning Wheel.' She is practising 'Tho' now 'Thro' the Wood, Laddie.' "

It may be added that Ralph Harrison was quite a musician, a composer of hymn tunes, many of which were exceedingly popular; one in particular called "Warrington" being well known a century ago. In all this one may see a sort of revenge for Cuthbert Harrison, the much persecuted Nonconformist minister, his numerous progeny winning great distinction and helping to keep his name glorious.

VI.—BANKFIELD, THE HOME OF CUTHBERT HARRISON.

Bankfield, until about 50 years ago, was the residence of the Harrison family. It is a very substantial building, and only a few minutes' walk from Singleton Grange. It lies a little off the main road leading to Poulton and Blackpool, and, on one side, overlooks the Wyre. Nestling among the trees, which abound in the neighbourhood, it is beautifully sequestered, and one can easily understand why William Harrison, the Nonconformist minister referred to, should have fallen into raptures about the charms of his ancestral home when he visited it about the middle of the 18th century. Some trouble about a bridge over the Wyre near by, in which Cuthbert Harrison was a prominent figure, is referred to in the following :—

“Cuthbert Harrison and Bankfield.—Preston Sessions.—July 16th, 1674. This Court doth desire Mr. Ralph Longworth, of Catterall; Mr. William Heskett, of The Maner (?); Mr. Cutht. Harrison, of Banckfield; and John Ffaile, of Singleton, yeoman, to appoint some convenient tyme and take with them men of skill and view a certain place called Banckfield Poole, where it is desired a new stone bridg may be built

wch Poole lyes within Singleton Grang,
and to consider what necessity there is for
a stone bridg to bee builded over the saide
Poole, and what will bee the charg thereof,
and to certifie the same to this Court at
the next Sessions here to bee holden.

KENYON."

" October the 7th, 1674.

" Wee whose names are subscribed (accord-
inge to an Order to us directed by the
Sessions houlden att Preston, date the
sixteenth day of July last past) have
viewed a certaine place called Banckfield
Poole, within Singleton Grainge, with the
assistance off able and skillffull workmen ;
where we ffound there is very great necessity
ffor a new stone bridge to be there builded
by reason off the overflowinge off salt water,
whereby many passengers have been there
stopped and others in great danger off their
lives rydinge through the same ; the affore-
said Poole lying in the high way betweene
the markets of Layton and Garstange, and
wee doe humbly conceive the charge thereoff
will be the sume of 58li. 9s. 2d., all which
we certifie to this Honorable Court. As
witnessse our hands the day and yeare above
written.

WILL HESKETT.

RA. LONGWORTH.

CUTHBERT HARRISON.

JOHN FFAILE."

“ Sir,—

“ You may remember that aboute two or three Sessions agoe an Order was maide for the issueing out of a rewle for the erectinge of a certaine bridge called Banckfield Poole Bridge and there upon wee advisedly consideringe who to appoint Survieers of the sd bridge did appoint Will Heskett, Esq., Mr. Charles Westby, James Bickerstafe and William Crompton, since which Sessions one Mr. Cuthbert Harrison and John Ffayle, either by mistake of Mr. Rowe or by Mr. Harrison sollicitinge the rewle is contravened, and the said Ffayle and Mr. Harrison nominated to bee two of the Surveiours for the sd bridge, at which tyme the sd Harrison did use meanes, but the Court did not think it convenient or fit for either of them to act, soe wee desire you will bee pleased to send an order for to prevent either of them actinge as Surviers, seinge it was at the tyme aforesaid, for several reasons, against the Order of the Court. Soe in the interim wee remaine.

Yor ffreinds and servants,

CHR. PARKER.

THOS. BUTLER.

Bradkirke,

July 15th, '75.”

“ Jany., 1676/7.

“ To ye right honl. his Majesties Justices of Peace for ye Countie of Lanc. assembled at your Genall Quarter Sessions at Preston.

“ The humble peticon of John Ffaile, of Singleton, yeoman Sheweth, yt formerlie yor petitioner being supvisor of ye highe ways in Singleton, it was upon ye solicitations and endevors of yor peticonr and others of ye neighbourhood obteyned from yor Honble Court yt a new bridge should bee made over Banckfield Poole in Singleton aforesaid and in ye p’secucon of yt business yor peticonr hath disbursed necessarlie the sume of 3li. 19s. 6d., ye pticulers whereof appeares by ye note affixed. But soe it is maie it please yor Worppps yt ye overseers of ye said bridge whoe have sufficient of ye Counties monies in theere hands refuse to paie ye same before they shall see yor order for to doe ye same. Maie it please yor Worppps to grant yor order yt ye said overseers maie paie yor petitioner his aforesaid disbursements of 3li. 19s. 6d.

JOHN FFAILE.”

Evidently some attempt was made to keep Cuthbert Harrison and John Fayle, whose daughter Richard Harrison afterwards married, as much out of the matter as possible.

VII.—LATER DAYS.

It may strike one as somewhat strange that with possibly one exception, there is no record of any visit to Elswick during these times by distinguished divines like Oliver Heywood, Henry Newcome, John Howe, Thomas Jollie and Isaac Ambrose, and may be the explanation is to be found mainly in the fact previously named that it was so far away from the line of life. Thomas Jollie, however, in his Note Book mentions a great meeting, shortly after Cuthbert Harrison's death, in the following terms :—

“ Upon the 20th of 4th M [1687] there was very great thunder and lightning at Elswick—Chappell in the ffield—country, it was very terrible ; there was then in the Chappell a great meeting of Nonconformists to whom it did noe harm, but it fell upon the hous of a bitter enemy hard by, who himself was burned by it and one slain by it outright who was by him detained from the meeting that afternoon, there was another in the same hous was also slain by it outright who probably was jangling away the Sabbath.”

Though the statement is a little obscure, Mr. Jollie seems to suggest that it was a Thanksgiving meeting for the "publique liberty," and the date casts a little light upon the expression. In 1687, James II. issued a Declaration of Indulgence, which suspended the operation of the repressive legislation of previous years. It was not at all popular, because it was simply an exercise of the Royal prerogative and few Nonconformists availed themselves of it, but it at least gave them the opportunity of meeting without fear of molestation, and the Elswick meeting is probably an illustration of this. From the way in which Mr. Jollie describes it, it would almost seem that he was present at it.

Recent research has brought to light the name of John Parr as probably the immediate successor of Cuthbert Harrison. He is placed by Calamy among his sufferers, though he does not seem to have been ejected from any particular church. He was, however, several times fined heavy sums and spent some weeks in Chester gaol because of his Nonconformity. It was in 1689, just after the passing of the Toleration Act, that a license was recorded for "John Parr of Elswick Chapel." Dr. Swarbrick, previously mentioned, who died in 1696, left to John Parr of Preston 40s. This was doubtless because of his former connection with Elswick Chapel as minister. In 1672 he is described as a Congregational teacher at

Farington, near Preston, and about the same time his name is linked with Darwen Nonconformity. Mainly, however, it is his connection with Preston Nonconformity for which he is noted. He appears as minister at Walton in 1703, the cause there later removing to Preston, and he is in the early list of Preston ministers. He died about 1714, and how long he was at Elswick has not been ascertained. The further history of the Elswick Church is full of interest but it lies outside the scope of this story.

VIII.—THE MOTHER OF FYLDE CONGREGATIONALISM.

Until recently, there was no memorial of Cuthbert Harrison in the Church, but through the kindness of the late Mr. John Higham, of Farnworth and Fairhaven, a handsome bronze tablet was erected in it, thus inscribed :—

“ To the memory of the Rev. Cuthbert Harrison, B.A., a native of these parts, who was ejected in 1662 from Shankill, Ireland, narrowly escaping to England in a ragged disguise. He made his way to his home at Bankfield, Singleton, and during the long, dark days of persecution, in spite of fines and imprisonment, ministered to the people of Elswick until his death in October, 1681. His remains were laid in the graveyard of the Kirkham Parish Church. This tablet was erected by John Higham, Esq., C.C., of Farnworth, 18th January, 1920.”

The tablet was unveiled by Mrs. Higham at the morning service on the date given, who urged the young to prove themselves worthy of the great heritage into which they had entered. It was my privilege to occupy the

pulpit, and the sermon, which dealt with Cuthbert Harrison, contained the following :—

“ At the instigation of his great enemy, Richard Clegg, he was frequently in the Law Courts ; heavy fines were imposed upon him, terms of imprisonment were endured, but he seems to have kept his cheery spirit amidst all. The stories in circulation about him would suggest that he was a man of strong personality with a large fund of humour and a spirit of unconquerable courage and faith, which must have been the despair of those who thought to silence and repress him.”

It stands to the credit of the Church that it kept faithful to the Evangelical witness during the dark days of the first half of the 18th century, when not only the “ Old Dissent,” but religion in England generally, fell into rapid decay, eventually becoming overlaid with Rationalism ; indeed, it reached such a low ebb that infidel writers like Voltaire gloated over the prospect of the early entombment of both Christianity and the Bible. Few churches, in Lancashire in particular, escaped the awful blight, and there was a time when it seemed as if the Elswick Church would go the way of so many others in the matter, one of its ministers being strongly suspected. The tragedy was prevented doubtless, in part at least, by the visit of Captain Jonathan Scott, Whitefield’s great

friend, who did more than has ever yet been properly made known in connection with the Great Revival, and to whose labours Congregationalism in Lancashire, Cheshire, Derbyshire and Shropshire owes an immense debt.

As already stated, the Church is honoured with the name of "Mother of Fylde Congregationalism," and it is a name well deserved; for not only has it a long history, almost unique in the County, but in one way or another it has lent a helping hand to Congregationalism in Lancaster, Preston, Garstang, Fleetwood, Blackpool, Kirkham and all along the coast. For several years it has celebrated its Anniversary, dating it from 1649. The occasion is always a great one, immense crowds from all the district around assembling to hear some distinguished preacher. The services are always held in a marquee specially erected for the purpose, for the Church could only take in a mere fraction of the multitudes who assemble. In the Lancashire Congregational Year Book for 1901 is an interesting account of what would probably be about the first of these celebrations, from which the following is taken:—

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"In the early part of June of last year the Church celebrated its 250th Anniversary by a series of successful meetings, which drew large contingents of Congregationalists from Preston, Blackpool, Fleetwood, Lytham and St. Annes. Among those who

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OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

took part in the proceedings, besides local ministers, were Henry Higson, Esq. and A. A. Haworth, Esq., together with the Revs. Dr. Hunter, of Glasgow; Dr. Goodrich, Dr. Randles (Wesleyan), of Manchester, and T. Willis. The meetings were worthy of the occasion, and left an inspiring influence upon all who were privileged to attend them. Elswick Church is one of the oldest, probably the oldest, Congregational interest in the County, the one place that may possibly dispute this claim being Dukinfield. Excitement, interest and heroism are abundantly supplied by its history, one of its principal characters being Cuthbert Harrison, an ejected minister; quaint stories of whom are still current in the district."

Though the Church has seen so many years, it is still youthful as ever under the inspiring and able ministry of the Rev. W. S. Rowland, M.A., which has extended over fifteen years. His valuable work was recognised by the Lancashire Congregational Union in 1924, when he was appointed its President, the highest honour at its command. All who are interested in historic Nonconformity in particular will wish that this Church, which has borne such faithful witness to the Gospel for nearly three centuries, will continue to do so, for such witness will be needed not less as the years go by.

D U S T
MAY 12 1959

